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AN A. E. F. CLASS IN THE ACADEMIE JULIAN, PARIS

Art and Armies

BY GEORGE S. HELLMAN, A.M., SOMETIME DIRECTOR OF INSTRUCTION IN FINE AND APPLIED ARTS, A. E. F., AND DIRECTOR OF THE COLLEGE OF FINE AND APPLIED ARTS, AMERICAN E. F. UNIVERSITY

TO those who have not yet become aware of the achievements of American soldiers, during the period of the armistice, in the field of art, the juxtaposition of terms in the title of this paper may seem a curious one; and indeed, when the proposition was first broached, there were many doubting Thomases, to cavil at what seemed to them so fantastic a scheme. But the proof of the pudding is always in the eating, and it

may be questioned whether in that diverse menu prepared by the Army Educational Commission, whereof Professor John Erskine was Chairman, and from which some nine hundred thousand members of

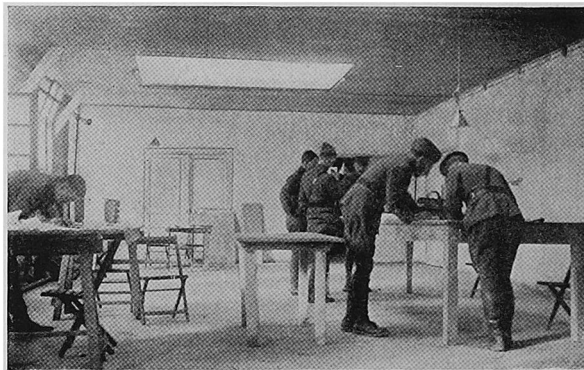
the A. E. F. derived benefit, there were any courses more enthusiastically partaken of than those in the Fine and Applied Arts. The group of some ninety associates that organized and carried on these courses were well aware of the influence of art, both



EARLY STAGES OF TRANSFORMING AN ARMY HOSPITAL INTO AN ARMY UNIVERSITY



A REVIEW IN PERSHING FIELD. GROUP OF SOLDIER STUDENTS OF THE A. E. F. UNIVERSITY ESTABLISHED AT BEAUNE, FRANCE



A FORMER HOSPITAL OPERATING ROOM WHICH WAS TRANSFORMED INTO AN A. E. F. UNIVERSITY ARCHITECTURAL DRAFTING ROOM

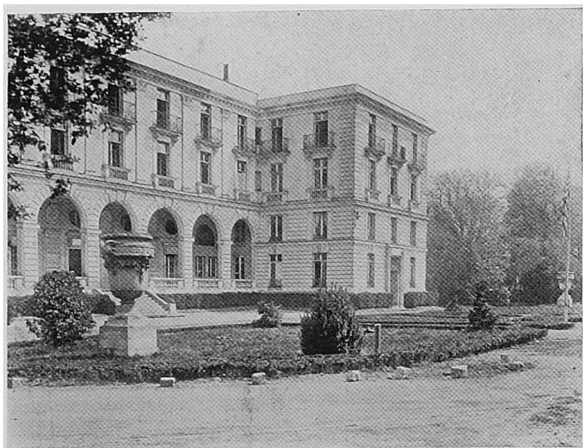
as a cultural leaven, and as a practical concomitant of life. They knew the spiritual release experienced by the artist as creator, and the intimate relationship of all phases of art in the actual business of the day. They knew, also, the enjoyment that is open to the individual or to the public that is in varying degree able to appreciate the work of the creator, and through their own emotions and experiences they, as thinkers, realized those ramifications which make of art an essential element in the intellectual, the æsthetic, and the economic life of a nation. But, perhaps, only a few of the more optimistic among them had confidence that during the few months available for their labors in France the knowledge that was theirs would effectively spread through the American army, evoking not only an eager response from thousands of soldiers desiring to pursue the art courses, but, indeed, the keenest support from officers on whose interest the success of the work largely depended. We have learned many new things from the great war of liberation so recently ended; but is there any more pregnant message that the American army has convincingly brought back from France than the message that we Americans, for all our lack of art traditions, are essentially an art-loving people?

It was in October, 1918, that the idea of teaching art to the soldiers first came into being. The German U-boats were still engaging in their deadly tasks, and

while the outcome of the war was, with fair assurance, predicted in favor of the Allies, the general opinion of military experts was that victory would not eventuate before the Spring of 1919. It thus seemed likely that those who had in charge the entire educational program for American soldiers abroad, would have perhaps half a year wherein to develop their plans for the period of armistice. The sudden collapse of Germany in November, 1918, did away with this modicum of leisure in preparation, and necessarily led to high pressure for all concerned in the task of organizing. How this task was achieved in the Fine and Applied Arts was, briefly, as follows:

A small group of men distinguished in the art life of New York met at various times during the months of November and December to discuss the possibilities of art instruction for the soldiers, and as a result, the Department of Fine Arts of the Army Educational Commission of the Y. M. C. A. issued a preliminary outline of plans wherein indications were given of the function of the Department in relation to the army as a whole, and its functions in relation to especially qualified soldiers.

It is indeed gratifying for all of us who participated in framing this preliminary outline to know, now that the work is over, not alone that it proved practical as a whole, but that almost every one of the details concerning suggestions, as well as the prophecies made, proved subject



PAVILLON DE BELLEVUE. MAIN BUILDING OF THE
A. E. F. ART TRAINING CENTER

to no revision. We suggested that the atelier system, based on the *École des Beaux Arts* model, be the basis of organization as regards architecture and various fields of painting and sculpture; that the more qualified students should lead and supervise the younger and less experienced men; that the work of the students would be criticized by the "patrons" who, in our case, would include some of the most important men in the French art world, both professors of art and renowned artists; that army lists of officers who, prior to their entrance upon military duties had had experience in some field of art, become part of our instruction personnel; while some of them would, at the same time, be pursuing our courses for their own benefit; that arrangements might be made with the General Staff, so to allocate qualified soldiers as to facilitate our instruction of them, while others would be permitted to attend existing art academies and ateliers in Paris; that some men who might wish to continue their studies in France might, at their own request, be mustered out in France; that national, municipal and other art institutions of France would make available to American soldiers special facilities as regards libraries, exhibitions, lecture courses, work in studios, etc.; that we ourselves would have frequent conferences with leaders of art in France, both official and technical, and with the qualified Americans

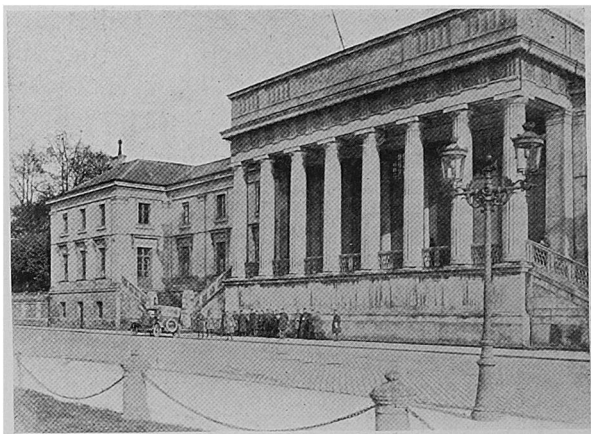
already abroad. Every one of these projects and prophecies was to be realized. As to the final paragraph of this preliminary outline, there are some of us who believe that it is yet to come into fruition. This final paragraph reads as follows:

"While the activities planned are concerned with the immediate benefit to the American Army, there are involved potentialities of a permanent institution, growing out of this 'Army Atelier system.' Such an institution, an American Academy in France (based on French methods, but under American direction, and of course admitting Americans in numbers impossible at the Paris *École des Beaux Arts*) would be the finest kind of a 'liaison' institution between the two countries."

Writers in various magazines have indicated how, in the A. E. F. Art Training Center at Bellevue, such an institution was potentially founded, and, for those months prior to the return of the A. E. F., functioned with distinguished success. Indeed, my only regret in connection with my duties abroad is that the unexpected necessity of founding another art college for the A. E. F. at Beaune made it impossible to find leisure to carry on a movement at that time for Bellevue's perpetuation as an American Academy in France.

Arriving at Paris last Christmas Eve, I found myself with nothing but the old time confidence, and whole-hearted promises of support from my college friend, Professor Erskine, whose enthusiasm for the art work was to prove so valuable. The immediate necessity was to get funds for the purposes of material, and to build up a personnel. The next day, a conference with Mr. Mortimer L. Schiff, Mr. George W. Perkins, and Mr. John R. Hall, of the Y. M. C. A. Finance Committee resulted in their assurance that funds would be forthcoming; and, indeed, during the period prior to the taking over of the Educational Organization by the army itself, approximately \$30,000 were accorded by this Committee for the art work.

When, early in January, General Robert I. Rees arrived from Washington, it became feasible to apply for and obtain from General Headquarters (G. H. Q.) officers qualified as associates in organizing and carrying on the art courses. These officers reported for duty to General Rees at Paris, and later to his representative, Colonel C. W. Exton, and then were instructed to confer with me concerning their tasks. The situation was unprecedented and in some ways anomalous; yet our entire group quickly developed into a very friendly and very busy staff, and the pleasant associations formed abroad have been continued at monthly luncheons since our return. Major Gray, who was to become commanding officer at Bellevue; Major Cunningham, the head of the department of Decorative and Commercial Art at our college at Beaune; Captain Peixotto and Captain Burger, respectively heads of the departments of Painting at these two institutions; Captain Embury who headed and developed, with the assistance of Lieutenant Cellarius, the Hospital Section of the art work; Lieutenants Pearce, Foster, Moise, Scannell, Rice, and a host of other splendid young officers, never found any work too arduous, or any difficulty insurmountable where the interests of the soldier art students were involved. And many of these officers, fully aware of the importance of the duties they had to perform in varying



PALAIS DE JUSTICE, TOURS, ONE OF THE PLACES VISITED BY THE A. E. F. ART EDUCATION CLASSES

branches of the army service during the days of fighting, have said that they now look back to their labors for the art students as in some ways essentially the most important of the duties they carried out in obedience to military commands.

Mr. Lloyd Warren, Director of the Beaux Arts Institution of Design in New York, and Mr. Grosvenor Atterbury, formerly President of the Society of American Architects, had followed from America to become the two Assistant Directors in our department, and Ensign A. M. Brown, later Instructor in Architecture at Bellevue, completed the trio of my associates from this side of the water. Other civilians to join our group were recruited from the Y. M. C. A. secretaries already in France, and in this way, we were able to obtain such efficient men as Mr. E. B. Homer, formerly Dean of the School of Fine Arts at Providence, Rhode Island.; Messrs. Lorado Taft and Solon Borglum, the distinguished sculptors; Messrs. Ernest Coxhead, H. B. Monges, and John Bakewell, all noted Californian architects; Messrs. John W. Cotton, James E. McBurney, Robert F. Logan, and other well-known painters. We were also fortunate enough to enlist the interest of the American Red Cross in our work and thus have detailed as associates Mr. John Galen Howard, Director of the School of Architecture in the University of California, Mr. Leslie Caldwell, who was to head the depart-



SCULPTURE CLASS AT BELLEVUE

ment of Interior Decoration at Bellevue, and Mr. William C. Titcomb, who, at Bellevue, had charge of the itineraries of the students, an important phase of the work supervised at Beaune by Mr. Coxhead, who was the Chief of Field Work in general. The Army, the Y. M. C. A., and the Red Cross thus supporting us, we turned for further aid to the American Library Association, and to the French themselves. From the A. L. A., through the cordial interest of Mr. Herbert Putnam, Librarian of Congress, and Messrs. Stevenson and Kerr, who headed the library work abroad, we obtained really remarkable collections of art books, for the most part illustrative rather than textual, for our two colleges, as well as for the twenty-seven hospitals where art courses were conducted.

The French, both in official and in practising art circles, entered enthusiastically into our project, and our Honorary Advisory Committee of some thirty distinguished Frenchmen included, among others, Ambassador Jusserand, Captain André Tardieu, the right hand man of Premier Clemenceau, Léon Bonnat, François Flameng, and Directors and Curators of the Louvre, the Luxembourg, the Trocadero, etc., etc. Through the kind offices of J. B. Carrière, the sculptor, and Mlle. Jenny Serruys, our soldier art students were welcomed into the studios of practically every great artist in Paris. As the work developed and the students travelled through France, seeing the famous cathedrals, castles and museums, all manner of special privileges was ac-



FIGURE OF A SENTINEL MODELLED BY AN AMERICAN E. F. UNIVERSITY STUDENT, SERGEANT AZZI

corded them by municipal institutions and officials and by the residents themselves. No part of the American E. F. came into closer and more cordial touch with the French than these art students, and it is quite impossible to gauge the great and permanent benefit on the side of better international understanding, resulting therefrom. The paintings, sketches, and measured architectural drawings, brought back from this "field work" will doubtless speak for themselves when the War Department holds the exhibitions already planned in this connection; and how intensely General Pershing, General Rees, and the other authorities at Chaumont were interested, is perhaps evidenced by the fact that at one time when we wished to send two hundred soldiers from Beaune for a week's study visit to Paris and its environs, and were confronted by a military regulation which permitted sending only three students into the restricted Paris area, ways were found to solve the difficulty,



GROUP OF SMALL SCULPTURE BY A. E. F. ART TRAINING CENTRE STUDENTS AT BELLEVUE



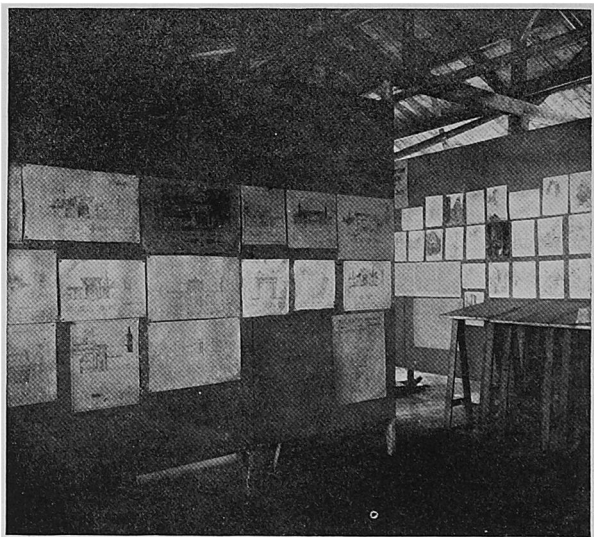
SOME STUDENTS IN THE A. E. F. ART EDUCATIONAL WORK STUDYING ARCHITECTURE IN THE ATELIER LALOUX, PARIS

and the crowning desire of all these eager students was realized.

Between four and five thousand applications for the art courses reached our office, but as the application had to be approved by the commanding officers, many of whom, in the early stages of our work, did not realize its value, and, moreover, as only a small portion of any division could be recommended for entrance into our College of Fine and Applied Arts, I hazard a guess, based on conversations with numerous soldiers, that this number was perhaps a third or a fourth of the men who wished to study some form of art during the period of the armistice. We had expected that there would be two three-months terms at our colleges, and this would have made it possible for us to teach almost all the approved applicants. The swift return of the A. E. F. to America of course interfered with our plans and expectations, but even so, we had about nine hundred art students in our two colleges, and about one thousand in the hospital classes. In such famous Paris ateliers as the Académie Julian, the Atelier Laloux (whose able Director, M. Victor Laloux, Dean of French Architects, was one of our earliest friends), the Ateliers Jaus-selly and Colorossi, we had between one and two hundred painters, sculptors and architects. This Paris work was in charge of Mr. Cyrus W. Thomas, the secretary of American Beaux Arts Archi-

tecs in Paris, assisted on the side of military discipline, by two army officers. There was, however, no slightest breach of discipline, the students finding their work far too absorbing for any participation in what might otherwise have been temptations of the Latin Quarter. One of our sergeants, at the Académie Julian, tied with a Frenchman in a Beaux Arts Competition in Design, in which one hundred and forty French students and a handful of American soldiers took part, and in the monthly exhibitions of the best work, our soldiers were always creditably represented, as well as in the Spring Exhibition at the Salon.

And yet, as after the lapse of months, we all review this undertaking, while some of us may think with most workman-like pride of the A. E. F. Art Training Centre at Bellevue, so ably conducted by Mr. Warren, so enriched by the lectures and criticisms of famous French artists and scholars; while others contemplate with most sympathy the hospital classes, where about thirty women art instructors (teachers or practisers of art in private life), recruited from the Y.M.C.A. and the American Red Cross, brought real joy into the lives of the wounded and the convalescent; while still others remember with most interest the College of Fine and Applied Arts at



AN EXHIBITION OF THE WORK OF A. E. F. SOLDIER ARCHITECTS

the American E. F. University, where the enthusiasm of the students ran so high that we could never get sufficient men to form a base-ball team, such as the other colleges had; while the significance is patent of the support of the French, who in their newspapers and magazines recorded with pleased and pleasant admiration the activities of the American army in studying art in France; yet probably the most gratifying thought of all comes with the recollection that ninety per cent of the five hundred more advanced students who were, as our courses drew to their close, permitted to voice their inclinations, voted to have the Director request the Commander-in-Chief that they might be permitted to pursue these courses for another three months, in preference to returning to America. When one considers how eager these officers and men were, prior to their entrance into the art classes, to get back home, there surely is no need for further emphasis on the value to them of their studies. And the second most gratifying thought is that throughout army official circles there came rapidly and with constantly increasing intensity the appreciation of the intimate relation between art and life, so that in the end, the enthusiasm of many famous generals, and of the commanding officers of all the hospitals almost outran our own. They saw our students designing and supervising the erection of ninety-eight buildings of the A. E. F. University; decorating club houses and theaters and barracks; making posters for the social hygiene work, for athletic contests and what not; illustrating various publications; and bringing back from their field work, and achieving in their classroom work, a multitude of paintings and drawings, which, when placed on exhibition over week-ends, drew thousands of American soldiers and French civilians into our

buildings. They learned also that our students came from every rank and condition of life, and that among the most proficient in our elementary classes were men—firemen, lumbermen, real estate agents, clerks—who had never before received the opportunity to develop their unquestioned talent. They were also quick to see many evidences of that democratic fraternity which is one of the spiritual elements among artists. The thousands of applications and the intense ardour of the art students and the equal enthusiasm of high army officers (among whom General Pershing, General Rees, Colonel Reeves, Colonel Exton it is an especial pleasure to name), and the widespread interest of students of other colleges in the work of the soldier-artists brought new opportunity to realize how inherent is the desire toward beauty among us Americans. The American army had supported and carried on this undertaking; for it must be remembered that while we civilians were taken, as members of the Educational Corps, into the army, there was really only a handful of such quasi-army men, the preponderant number of our associates being officers who had actively taken part in the war. The American army furnished the greater part of the material necessary for the art courses, and was even so liberal minded in its approval of all our plans as to take for granted the introduction of models into army posts. While, therefore, much credit is due to all our other co-adjutors, the success of the art courses belongs most significantly to the officers of all ranks, and the soldiers of all conditions, who, either as enthusiastic supporters of the work, or as intense students in it, made fruitful such an unprecedented undertaking as the instruction in Fine and Applied Arts, on a foreign soil, under circumstances fraught with many difficulties, in a time of war.

